

Incidents That Have Occurred on Police Chief R. T. Finney's Watch in Champaign

- In March of 2004, newly-appointed Champaign Police Chief R. T. Finney requests the Champaign City Council purchase Tasers for the Champaign Police Department. A vigorous public outcry in opposition to tasers, particularly from the African American community, persuades Finney to postpone the purchase of Tasers; declaring to the local media, that there first needs to be a better relationship developed between the Champaign police and the minority community.
- During the summer of 2004, Police Chief Finney is made aware that members of the African American community are videotaping uniformed police officers while officers are interacting with African Americans in the public way. According to then-state's attorney Elizabeth Dobson, Chief Finney authorized the seizure of the camera and the filing of class 2 felony eavesdropping charges against the videographers. Finney later attempted to explain his department's role in the criminal prosecution as "merely trying to get the videographers to the table for a talk." Later in 2008, the City of Champaign is forced to settle a civil lawsuit in favor of the two videographers. The documentary made from the filming of the police, called *Citizens Watch*, exposes to the public numerous instances of police behaving and patrolling very aggressively toward African Americans. Also in the film, the nightly campus mayhem is filmed showing police are nowhere to be found during the carousing and vandalism being done by binge drinking college students.
- 2005- Finney insists SRO's (police officers known as School Resource Officers) be placed in both Champaign high schools. Records show Champaign Police are generating more criminal cases against juveniles and 80% of the SRO's contacts are with African American students.
- April 2006- Two Champaign police field training officers and a staff sergeant respond to a call of a man on a porch with a gun. Police sneak up on the man and one officer shines his flashlight into the man's face, then shoots him with his revolver when the man asked what is going on and for the men to identify themselves. The man survives the shooting and is homeowner Larry Martin, on his own porch, holding a BB gun rifle, attempting to ward off vandals that had defaced his home earlier that week. A nationally recognized use of force expert investigates the shooting and finds the Champaign police negligent in the shooting. Later in 2008, the City of Champaign is forced to settle a civil lawsuit with a \$100,000 payout to victim Martin. Chief Finney maintains to the press that his officers followed proper police procedure in the incident.
- June of 2006- Responding to a call about a possible suicide attempt, Champaign police seal off an entire street and surround a car with a Franklin Middle School janitor inside, distraught over a broken relationship. Police forsake negotiations or crisis intervention in favor of ramming the car with an armored vehicle. The man flees in his car down the street whereupon he lethally shoots himself.
- March of 2007- 4 Champaign police officers are observed by dozens of witnesses near a church throwing a black 17 year-old against a fence, then dragging him into the middle of the street, applying knees into his body against the concrete, and repeatedly pepper spraying the youth in his face, sending him to the hospital. Police Chief Finney tells the press his officers followed proper police procedure. One of the officers later testifies at trial that Champaign police officers were given departmental orders to randomly check the I.D.'s of anyone in the Douglass Park area (considered an African American neighborhood) for outstanding warrants and enter the personal information into a computer database. The youth had refused to present I.D., and had walked away from officers before he was immediately attacked, according to eyewitnesses at the scene. Police falsify a probable cause for demanding I.D. by telling the public the youth was trespassing a closed park after dark, despite the fact that the Champaign Park District was

conducting late-night programming for youth in the park. The youth was never charged with trespassing to the park by the state's attorney's office, but is found guilty of misdemeanor resisting arrest and obstruction of justice over the testimony of a dozen civilian witnesses at trial.

- April of 2007- Champaign police give chase to a gun-wielding suspect who police observe fleeing into the home of an unsuspecting family in a low-income neighborhood. Despite verbal warnings from eyewitnesses at the scene that there were women and children inside the home, Champaign police shoot blindly into the house, sending bullets over the heads of innocent bystanders. Chief Finney has told the press his officers followed proper police procedure. The City of Champaign offers the household \$200 to not sue the City. The offer is refused and a civil case is still pending. A Champaign field training officer, Officer Mark Briggs, who was involved in this shooting and the shooting of Larry Martin is asked to resign from the force in 2009.
- June of 2007- Champaign police respond to a report of a man with a gun near Westside Park by engaging in a shootout with a well-known mentally ill subject who had been living in his car by the park for almost two years. Before Police Chief Finney holds a press conference about the incident at police headquarters, Finney throws a news reporter out of the room who he does not like. Under threat of a lawsuit from the ACLU, Finney admits he was wrong to demand the reporter be removed. Chief Finney claims his officers were suddenly shot at by the man from inside his car. Ballistic evidence reveals that officers were not surprised by an attack but rather had already surrounded the car with guns drawn. One officer was injured by friendly fire, and the back windshield was blown out of the vehicle.
- Fall of 2008- Chief Finney lobbies the Champaign City Council to vote against the implementation of a civilian review board to review citizen complaints against the police. Currently, complaints can only be done at police headquarters, citizens do not get copies of their complaints, the complaints are private, and the police themselves, decide if an officer acted improperly. Discipline to officers, if any, is also kept confidential.
- December of 2008- Champaign police detective Lisa Staples is found driving drunk in an unmarked squad car, going the wrong way on I-72 at 2:30 a.m. The DUI case is removed from the usual traffic court judge, and in just 18 days after the incident, another judge allows for a plea bargain of court supervision so the officer can keep her job as a police officer. Under enormous public outrage over the sweetheart plea deal, Staples resigns from the police department.
- June of 2009- Champaign Police Officer of the Year for 2009, Eric Bloom, falsifies a report against a homeless man from the Tent City group. Numerous eyewitnesses at the scene saw the man toss a cellphone to another group member (who caught the phone in mid-air) to record the rough physical treatment he was receiving at the hands of police. Officer Bloom charged the homeless man with assault on a police officer, claiming the man threw the phone at another officer in order to hurt the officer. Under public scrutiny, the Champaign City attorney is considering dropping the case.
- June of 2005 to 2009- the statewide mandated racial profiling study conducted every year has shown the Champaign Police Department stops minority drivers at a disproportionate rate. Chief Finney has disputed the statistics generated by Northwestern University as flawed and denies his officers ever racially profile.
- Members of the African American community report it is routine for some Champaign police officers to follow law-abiding African American drivers with no probable cause, are consistently rude to members of the African American community, and are extremely hostile toward African American males. Chief Finney now wants the Champaign City Council to revisit the Taser issue.